

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Miami, Florida**

*October 26, 2009*

*The President.* Thank you. Some special acknowledgments: First of all, I don't think people quite understand, Nancy Pelosi is not simply the first woman Speaker of the House; I think she's going to go down as one of the greatest Speakers of all time. And she's very nice, and she's very friendly, but, boy, she is tough. [*Laughter*] And that's what you need when you're putting up with all the criticism and the carping and the griping, and that's from the Democrats. [*Laughter*] I mean, you should see what she has to put up with from the Republicans. So I could not have a better partner in trying to move the country than Nancy Pelosi.

We've got some wonderful other elected officials that I want to acknowledge very briefly. First of all, my former colleague, a great Senator and, most importantly, former astronaut, Bill Nelson—please give Bill a big round of applause. Somebody who is doing a great job on behalf of the DCCC, Chris Van Hollen is in the house. Three outstanding Members of Congress from Florida who are here: Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Kendrick Meek, Alan Grayson. And it is my expectation that she will be the next Governor of the great State of Florida—Alex Sink is in the house.

Now, I saw you guys taking pictures, and I talked about the family, and, you know, I don't know how much more you want to hear from me before you get to dinner, but I want to start off mainly by saying thank you. There are a lot of people in this room who were there from the start when nobody could pronounce my name, and when you tried to explain to your friends that you were supporting Barack Obama, they'd say, huh? And then there are people in this room who picked up the baton once a hard-fought nomination was completed.

But across the board, you have people in this room who have not just contributed money, but contributed time and energy, their reputations, to moving this country in a new direction. And whether it's at the DNC level, the DSCC level, the DCCC—whatever "D" it is that you participated in—I want you to know that I'm incredibly grateful. And it has made an enormous difference to our country.

If you think about what we were confronting 9 months ago, I think people are starting to have some selective memory. It's starting to get a little hazy, so let me just remind you. First of all, it's only been 9 months since the Obama family moved into the White House. I'm here to report, by the way, Malia and Sasha are doing great. Michelle is a fabulous First Lady. We have a new dog, Bo, who is the only other male in the household. [*Laughter*] And he and I are often in the doghouse together. [*Laughter*]

But let's just think about what it was like when we entered into the White House 9 months ago. We were losing 700,000 jobs a month. The financial system was on the brink of meltdown. Prominent economists from both sides of the economic spectrum were suggesting that we might be going into a great depression—not a recession, but a great depression. And I think people were fearful that things might start spinning out of control.

And that's why, working with Nancy Pelosi and the other Members of Congress here, we acted so swiftly and we acted so boldly to pass a Recovery Act that has pulled us back from the

brink. And although usually I try not to do a tally of what it is that we've accomplished, since you guys are early stakeholders in what we've done, I want you to understand what we did just with the Recovery Act.

First of all, as a consequence of the Recovery Act, we provided millions of people unemployment insurance who otherwise would have been in a hopeless situation. We made sure that COBRA, which is the main health care program for people who've lost their job, was 65 percent cheaper so that they could hang onto their health insurance while they were looking for a job. We made sure that the States had enough money so that they didn't have to lay off teachers and police officers and firefighters. It's estimated that just in schools alone, we saved 250,000 jobs across America—250,000 educators, education professionals, would have been laid off had it not been for our swift action.

But we didn't just help States who were burdened under plummeting tax revenues. We didn't just help individuals who were losing their jobs or seeing their hours cut back. The Recovery Act was also the largest Federal investment in education in history—in history. It also happened to be the largest investment in clean energy in history. It was also the largest investment in basic research and science and R&D in history. It also happened to be the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

So all told, this not only helped pull us back from the brink—and now suddenly, everybody takes for granted the stock market at 9,000 or 10,000. People just take for granted that, well, you know, it looks like industrial production is kicking back up. Not only did we steer the economy away from potential catastrophe, but we also laid the groundwork now for making sure that our kids are going to be able to compete in an international, global marketplace.

We also made sure that we can get back on the frontlines of energy and not simply react to whatever oil producers decide should be the price of a barrel of oil today or tomorrow. We also set in motion the kinds of innovation and technological investment that is going to determine whether or not America remains at the cutting edge for the foreseeable future.

So that's just the Recovery Act. We did that, by the way, in January, the first month I was in. Now, we didn't stop there. So let's see what else we did. We passed something called the Lilly Ledbetter Act because we believe that women should be paid the same as men for the same work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research because we believe that science should guide Federal policy. We made sure that we passed the toughest bill regulating credit cards in a generation. We banned housing fraud and put some serious teeth into enforcement. We made sure that 11 million children had health insurance, including 4 million who had never had it before.

We passed a national service act that allows young people and not so young people to participate in community service—the kind of programs that—where's Alonzo and Tracy?—the kinds of programs that you see, the outstanding work that's being done in Miami. We're giving opportunities for young people to get involved all across the country in those kinds of service activities giving back to their community.

What else, Nancy?

*Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.* Veterans.

*The President.* Veterans—we just made sure that veterans are not going to have to wait for their budgets and that they're going to be in place. And by the way, we increased funding for veterans' services by more than had been done in 30 years.

Now, this is all just domestically. Then it turns out I got this other side of my portfolio, two wars. And, as promised, we are on a pathway to removing our troops from Iraq and putting Iraq in the position where they can secure their own country. We are finally getting Afghan policy right after long years of drift. We've put forward a vision for reducing nuclear stockpiles and moving towards a safer and more secure world without nuclear weapons. We have mended fences and strengthened our alliances with countries on every continent so that they know that they have a partner in America, and America once more is viewed as a leader.

Now, that's just been in 9 months. Here is my main message to you: We're just getting started. I know that the battles out there seem bruising and there are people saying mean things about me and folks are worried. And I try to explain to Dwyane and these other ball players, just because I'm skinny doesn't mean I'm not tough. *[Laughter]* I don't rattle. I'm not going to shrink back, because now is the time for us to continue to push and follow through on those things that we know have to be done that haven't been done for decades.

We know that our education system is inadequate to a new global economy. I mean, if you looked at how African American and Hispanic children are doing here in Miami or anywhere in the country, it is unacceptable. And we know that is our future workforce. And if they are not trained and getting a decent education, then nobody is going to be doing well in this country.

We know that it is unsustainable for us to keep on importing more and more oil. When OPEC first started and Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon and all those folks announced that we were going to move on the path of energy independence, we were importing 30 percent of our oil. We're now importing 70 percent. Do the math. Our economy can't sustain it, and by the way, neither can the environment. And every time I fly into Florida, I got to say, you know, that water is really close everywhere you go. You don't want an extra foot or two of sea. And so we've got to take that seriously. Now is the time to do it by passing serious energy legislation.

Now is the time to pass health care. And for those of you who have health insurance, I know that sometimes this seems like, well, is this something we can afford to do? Let me tell you, premiums doubled for individuals over the last decade. They will double again in the coming decade. But for businesses, it's even worse. Anybody here who's a businessperson knows what's happened to your premiums. You've seen them go up in one year 28 percent, 30 percent. And at some point, you had to make a decision, and then you've got to tell your employees, "Look, I know it's right to cover you, I want to cover you, but I can no longer afford to cover you."

And so this is not just an issue for the millions of people who don't have health insurance. This is an issue for the people who have health insurance and don't understand what it is that could be happening in—almost certainly will happen in the years ahead, unless we get a handle on it. And by the way, the Federal Government can't afford it either. And neither can State governments. We will go bankrupt. So if you're out there thinking we also have to get control of our budget—and we do—the single best way for us to do it is to make sure that we pass health care reform.

Now, this is not going to be easy, but I am absolutely confident that we are going to get health care done by the end of this year, and Nancy Pelosi is just as confident. That's part of the reason I'm so confident, is Nancy is confident. *[Laughter]* And we are going to get an energy bill that is serious and deals not only with dependence on oil but also on climate change. And we're going to get a serious education bill that makes college more affordable for young people.

But none of these things are easy. And one of the things that I always try to emphasize to folks is we have to take a long view in this process. I was talking to some G-20 leaders who were kind of surprised on some of the debates about health care. They were saying, "Barack, why are these people running around putting a Hitler moustache on you? You're just trying to give health care to people." I said, "Yes, that's unusual." *[Laughter]*

But what I said was, you know, America is not a speed boat, it's an ocean liner. And it takes time to move a country this big, particularly because we are a democracy. And that's a good thing. We're supposed to have robust debate. Change isn't supposed to be easy. We're supposed to have to fight for it. And the fact that we've got the other party challenging us and pushing us and poking us on, that's a good thing. Ultimately, we will have a better product as a consequence of that. I want a competition of ideas. I want a strong and loyal opposition.

Now, what I won't abide by are people just standing on the sidelines who prefer to see defeat to actually getting something done because they think it provides a political advantage. These are folks who are cheering about us not getting the Olympics. What's up with that? It's the Olympics. I mean, the Olympics. Who roots against the United States getting the Olympics? *[Laughter]*

So my door is going to be open to working with the other side, and I know Nancy feels the same way, if they actually want to solve the challenges that we face. But if you're just going to stand on the sidelines, then I'm not going to have too much time for you. In fact, lately I've been feeling like somebody made a big mess and I'm—I got my mop, and I'm mopping the floor, and the folks who made the mess, they're standing there, "You're not mopping fast enough. You're not holding the mop the right way. It's a socialist mop." *[Laughter]* You know what, just grab a mop. *[Laughter]* Help me out here. Help out your country. Clean up the mess that you made.

So let me leave you with this thought, though, that as difficult as these last 9 months have been and as challenging as the next 9 months and the next 9 months after that will be, I just want to remind everybody what I meant when I talked about hope during the campaign. You know, hope is not blind optimism. It's not pie in the sky, everything is going to be just fine, we're just going to sit back and somehow those things that we wish for magically happen. That's not hope.

Hope is understanding what needs to be done and having confidence that if you work hard enough, if you sweat hard enough, if you're willing to mix it up and overcome setbacks and stare challenges in the face, that you can still achieve. That was the essence of our campaign when we started off. We didn't think, boy, this is going to be a cakewalk, getting a guy named Barack Hussein Obama elected President. *[Laughter]* Jeremy, do you remember us saying that? We didn't say that.

What we did say was this is what has to happen, this is where the country needs to go, and we are going to put our heart and soul into it, because we have confidence in the American people and we have confidence that if we do the right thing, then, you know what, the country is going to be better off. That was the source of excitement in our campaign. That was why it felt special. That's why we did something that nobody thought could be done.

And that's the same attitude that I want all of you to have as we move forward. None of this is a sure thing. Don't sign up to improve America if you think that it's just automatically going to happen on your timetable, and if it doesn't, you get disheartened.

But if you are willing to stand with us and work hard, if you understand how difficult and challenging it's going to be, and yet you still are determined to move forward anyway, then I'm telling you, I don't think there's anything that can stop us. And when I say "us," I don't mean Democrats, I mean us as Americans. There is nothing this country cannot accomplish, and I am absolutely confident that our best days are still ahead of us. But we've got to earn it. It's not a given. The future is something you earn. That's what we're fighting for right now, and you're helping us do it.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:38 p.m. at the Fontainebleau Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chief Financial Officer Adelaide "Alex" Sink of Florida; former National Basketball Association center Alonzo Mourning and his wife Tracy; Dwyane Wade, guard, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat; and Jeremy Bird, deputy director, Democratic National Committee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 27.

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*Names:* Bird, Jeremy; Grayson, Alan; Meek, Kendrick B.; Mourning, Alonzo; Mourning, Tracy; Wilson; Nelson, Clarence W. "Bill"; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Pelosi, Nancy; Sink, Adelaide "Alex"; Van Hollen, Christopher; Wade, Dwyane; Wasserman Schultz, Debbie.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. policy review; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material : Nonproliferation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; Business and industry : Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act of 2009; Business and industry : Home loan industry; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker; Democratic Party : Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Minority students; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Reform legislation, proposed; Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Energy legislation, proposed; Energy : Foreign sources; Environment : Climate change; Florida : Democratic Party events; Florida : President's visit; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Health and Human Services, Department of : State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Employer-based health insurance coverage; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; Illinois : Chicago, 2016 Summer Olympics bid; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Science and technology : Research and development; Science and technology : Stem cell research; Transportation : Highway system, modernization efforts; Veterans : Veterans Health

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